STUDENT SUCCESS CONFERENCE

1-3 JULY 2024

SOFITEL

MELBOURNE ON COLLINS

Student Equity Forum

Acknowledgement of Country

EPHEA

NAEEA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ENABLING EDUCATORS OF AUSTRALIA

ACSES Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success | Curtin University

SPERA Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia

ADCET Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training

Supporting you, Supporting Students

Equity Affiliated Organisations

Getting to know one another

On your table, introduce yourselves:

- Name
- Institution
- Your role in relation to Student Equity

What is Student Equity?

Professor Ian Li
Australian Centre for Student Equity & Success

Overview

- What is equity?
- Why is equity in higher education important?
- How have we addressed equity issues?
- Where are we headed?
- The role of ACSES

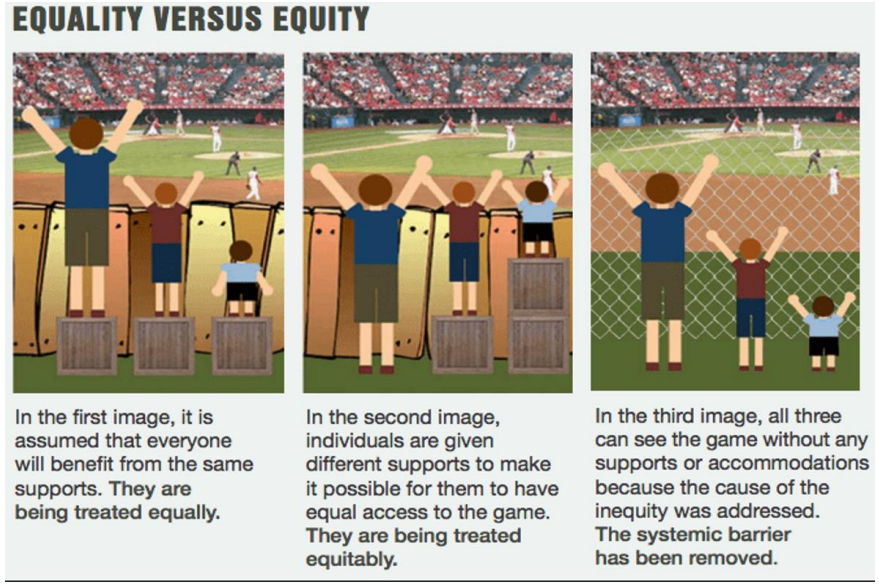
What is Equity?

Equality is recognising that, as human beings, we all have the same value. This means, we all have the same rights, we should all receive the same level of respect, and have the same access to opportunities.

Equity is about everyone achieving equal outcomes. We all have the same value and deserve a good life, but we all start from a different place… It's because of these differences that we sometimes need to be treated differently for us all to live safely, healthily, happily…and equally!

Source: Australian Human Rights Commission
https://humanrights.gov.au/lets-talk-about-equality-and-equity

Equity vs Equality



Source: Original concept by Craig Froehle, https://medium.com/@CRA1G/the-evolution-of-an-accidental-meme-ddc4e139e0e4

Equity requires that we look at what individual people and communities require to be able to access the same opportunities as others.

Everyone may be able to get to the game – but we need to ensure that they can participate fully.

Source: Australian Human Rights Commission https://humanrights.gov.au/lets-talk-about-equality-and-equity

What about higher education?

- **Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA): 80%** of new jobs in Australia will require a post-school qualification (HE and VET), with **55%** requiring a bachelor degree or higher.

- **Current Attainment:** Bachelor degree attainment among 25 to 34 year-olds is currently **45.6%**, including a boost from skilled immigration. The bachelor degree has become an entry level qualification.

- **Equity:** There are differences in university participation across various groups in Australian society due to a social exclusion and historic disadvantage, as well as a lack of *equitable* access to higher education services.

How far from equity are we?

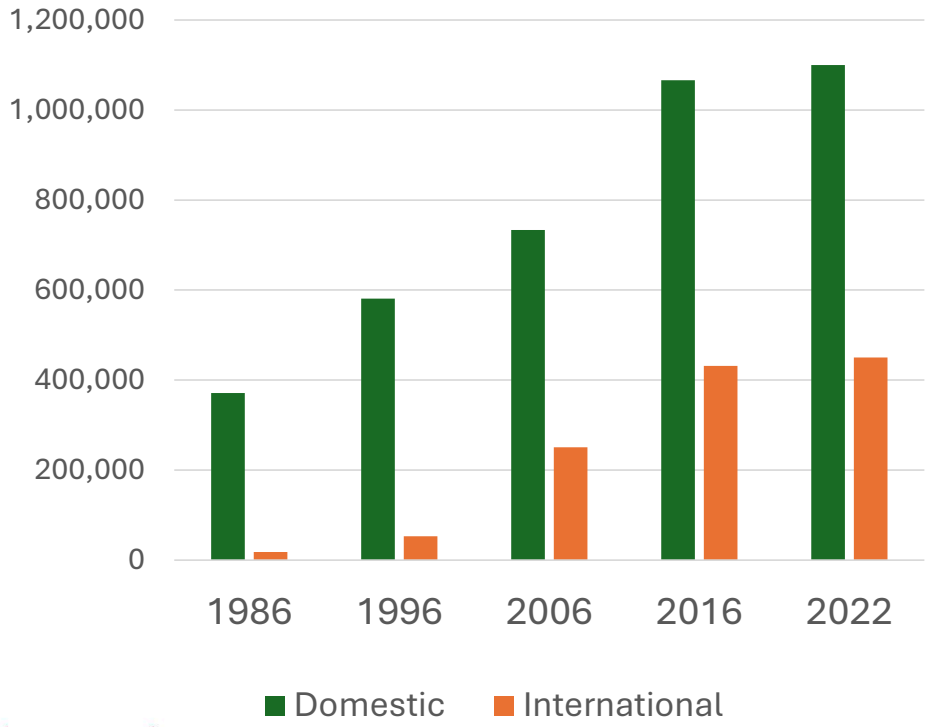
Equity Group	Undergraduate Enrolment Share (%)	Population Share (%)	Ratio*
Low SES	16.6	25.0	0.66
Regional/Remote	18.9	26.1	0.72
First Nations	2.1	3.4	0.62
Disability	10.2	8.4[+]	1.21
Equity (4 Groups)	**37.9**	**49.1**	**0.76**

Note: Domestic Undergraduate data for 2022 (latest full-year data). * Ratio = Enrolment Share/Population Share [+]Disability population share definition not consistent with university-defined definition

What have we done about it?

- **Historic Policy Shift – Expanding Higher Education:**
  - **1980s:** Major reforms late in decade – removal of the 'binary divide' between universities and colleges of advanced education (e.g. teacher's and nurse's colleges). Introduction of fee-paying international students.
  - **1990s:** Introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) in 1989 but rolled out in the 1990s. A focus on equity and ongoing expansion. Emerging focus on outcomes with the introduction of the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS).
  - **2000s:** Major reviews towards the end of the decade saw a focus on further expansion, learning and teaching, and student equity. A separate focus on school funding (Gonski reforms) and testing (NAPLAN) also took place.
  - **Result:** Bachelor degree attainment among 25 to 34 year-olds went from **12.3%** in 1989 to **45.6%** in 2021.

Transforming Higher Education



Expansion between 1986 and 2022:

- **Total:** 389,700 to 1.55 million
- **Domestic:** 371,500 to 1.1 million.
- **International:** 18,200 to 450,000.

The Role of Equity Policy - Groups

- ***A Fair Chance For All* (1990)**
  - Established the rationale for **equity policy** based on a study of higher education attainment in the Australian population.
  - Identified **equity groups** in undergraduate higher education –
  - **Low SES** (Low Socio-Economic Status) – home address in the *most disadvantaged quartile* (25%) of the population based on Census data.
    - **First Nations** (Indigenous Australians) – self-identified.
    - **Students with Disability** – self-identified.
    - **Regional and Remote** – home address in regional or remote area**.**
    - **WINTA** (Women in Non-Traditional Areas) – specific discipline (e.g., STEM areas)
    - **NESB** (Non-English Speaking Backgrounds) – self-identified.

The Role of Equity Policy - Indicators

- ***Martin Review – Equity and General Performance Indicators in Higher Education* (1994)**
  - Oversaw the creation of core equity groups **indicators** for equity.
  - Outlined changes to **data collection systems** needed to accommodate this policy change.
  - Outlined a **reporting system** for policymakers, including indicators on
    - **Access** – share of **commencing** undergraduate enrolments.
    - **Participation** – share of **all** undergraduate enrolments.
    - **Retention** – share of students **retained** from last year (excluding graduations).
    - **Success –** percentage of subjects passed.
    - **Attainment –** share of graduations.

The Role of Equity Policy - Last Decade

- ***Bradley Review of Higher Education* (2008)**
  - **Further Expansion:** Introduction of the **Demand-Driven Funding System** that saw domestic places increase over the 2010s.
  - **Equity Programs:** Introduction of the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) – funding to universities for equity programs from 'pre-access/outreach' through to retention and student support.
  - **Targets:**
    - **Attainment:** Over **40% of 25- to 34-year-olds** to have attained a bachelor's degree or higher by the year 2025. Achieved – 45.6% have a bachelor's degree at least. (with help from immigration).
    - **Equity:** At least **20%** of all domestic undergraduates to come from the lowest socio-economic quartile ('low SES' students). Not Achieved.

Impact on Equity Practice

- **Placing Equity at the Forefront of Higher Education Policy**
  - **Equity students** come from 50% of the population. Identifying groups and creating indicators that characterise success has been crucial.
  - **Equity Programs:** Annual funding under HEPPP is around $157 million per year, or $4 million per university. This has allowed universities to create programs to enable the **access** and **retention** of equity students, with success – **academic** and **post-graduate** – increasingly become the focus.
  - A more nuanced view of equity has emerged, looking at different groups (refugees; mature age; carers; prisoners etc.) and compounding disadvantage and intersectionality where multiple factors of disadvantage require tailored approaches for sub-groups and individuals.
  - **Key issue:** A focus on program design and evaluation to find out 'What works?' and can it be translated across the sector. The emphasis is on collaboration between universities, with ACSES playing a role in this through its **Equity Hub** initiative.

Where are we heading?

- ***Australian Universities Accord Review of Higher Education* (2024)**
  - **Creation of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC)**
    - A more focused approach to dealing with tertiary (higher and vocational) education.
    - Independent, but working with the Australian Government Department of Education.
    - Will include an Equity Commissioner and Regional Education Commissioner.
  - **Needs-Based Funding:** Ensuring funding accounts for the true costs of educating students from equity backgrounds.
  - **Parity Targets:**
    - **Long-term focus:** Looking at approaching *parity* between population and enrolment shares for the four equity groups by 2050.
    - **Widening participation:** Creating targets for institutions at the individual level but ensuring that these are achieved through a commitment to widening participation and not 'poaching'.

Roundtable Discussions

How is equity positioned in your higher education institution?

You may wish to discuss and consider…

- Where is equity positioned in your University Strategy?
- Who is driving your University's approach to equity? Is there a dedicated person or group of people?
- How has your University contributed to increased access and participation in higher education over the last fourteen years?
- How is your University responding to the University Accord?

What does Student Success look like in Enabling environments?

Karen Seary
President, NAEEA

Enabling context

Enabling environment: *What does it look like?*

- Diverse and contextualised
- Multi-dimensional
- Distinct from traditional higher education
- Nuanced view of educational disadvantage

Enabling demographic – *Who are our students?*

- Marginalised
- Diverse age and life circumstance
- Cumulative disadvantage
- Lifelong learning opportunity
- ‘Try before buy’

What are the challenges to access and participation?

- Geographic location
- Time/Competing commitments
- Health and disability
- Economic hardship
- Perception of self

Enabling and Student Success

Equity in Enabling *is more than just providing access to students who have experienced disadvantage. It is about ensuring they progress and complete.*

Success *is different for each student/reflective of the diversity of the Enabling cohort.*

Access – Preparedness - Confidence

Institutional

- Academic attainment
- Sense of belonging/connectedness/ being 'seen' and valued
- Preparedness/Solid foundation

Personal

- Access to undergraduate study
- Lessening of 'Imposter syndrome'
- Life skills beyond the curriculum
- Transformative/Life changing
- Deeper contribution to family life

Societal

- Increased HE participation in regional/remote areas
- Contribution to a more educated community
- 'Give back' – More active engagement in community
- Message to wider community – University is not just for the privileged

What does Student Success look like for students with disability?

Darlene McLennan
Manager, ADCET

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Belonging

- When you design for everyone- everyone benefits from the design
- It's everybody's job
- Be open and curious

What does Student Success look like for regional, rural and remote students?

Chris Ronan
President, SPERA

What does Student Success look like for students experiencing cumulative disadvantage?

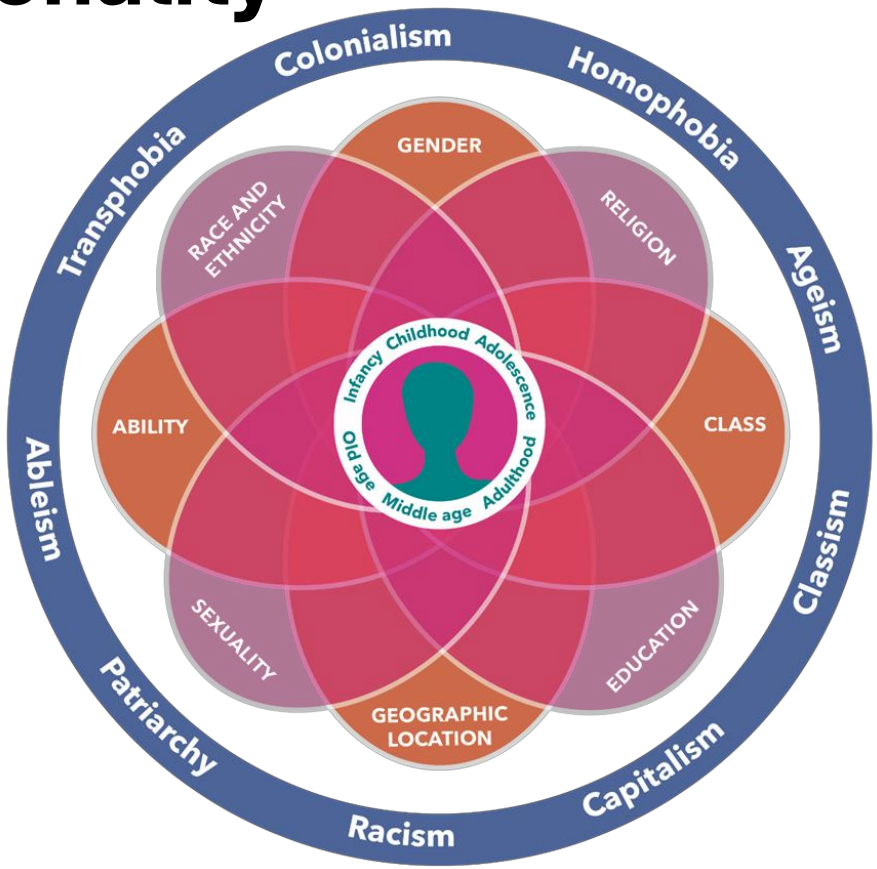
Sonal Singh & Nicola Cull
Vice-President & Treasurer, EPHEA

Understanding Intersectionality

- Intersectionality is a framework that examines how various social identifies (e.g. race, gender, class, sexuality and other factors) intersect to create complex experiences of power, privilege and oppression.

- Recognises that individuals can face multiple, overlapping forms of disadvantage and exclusion.

- Challenging assumptions.



Exploring Cumulative Disadvantage

- **Cumulative disadvantage** emphasises that disadvantages such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other factors do not act in isolation but intensify each others' effects:

  Simultaneous Disadvantages

  Long Term Impact

  Systemic Structural Factors

- **Educational Context:**

  Students experiencing intersecting marginalised identities and multiple disadvantages face significant challenges in accessing equitable education opportunities.

  Understanding cumulative disadvantage is essential for developing effective equitable educational policies and practices.

Addressing systemic barriers to higher education

- The long-term aspiration for the sector should be focused on inclusion and accessibility for everyone, eliminating systemic inequities and the singling out of individual student groups.

Roundtable Discussions

How are you improving the student experience of these cohorts in your university?

You may wish to discuss and consider…

- Structural changes that 'fix' the university, as well as programs or initiatives that target students.
- What you think is working well?
- Where are the gaps / opportunities?
- What are the challenges?

How do we know if we have been successful?

Nadine Zacharias

What do we mean by 'successful'?

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'Success' at university is a complex and multi-dimensional concept:

- Traditional definition of success: usually defined in terms of academic outcomes, including progression towards and completion of degree programs (O'Shea & Delahunty, 2018; Naylor, 2017)
- Individual definition of success: highly variable experiences involving both emotional and structural considerations (Rubin et al., 2022)
- Collectivist narratives of success: for First Nations' students, participation in higher education often reflects whole-of-community aspirations (Shalley et al., 2019)
- Complex notions of success: a dynamic interplay between the institution and its students (Kahu & Nelson, 2017; Krause & Coates, 2008)
- Sector-level notions of success: *The Best Chance for All* (Zacharias & Brett, 2019)

Success through the lens of student equity program evaluation

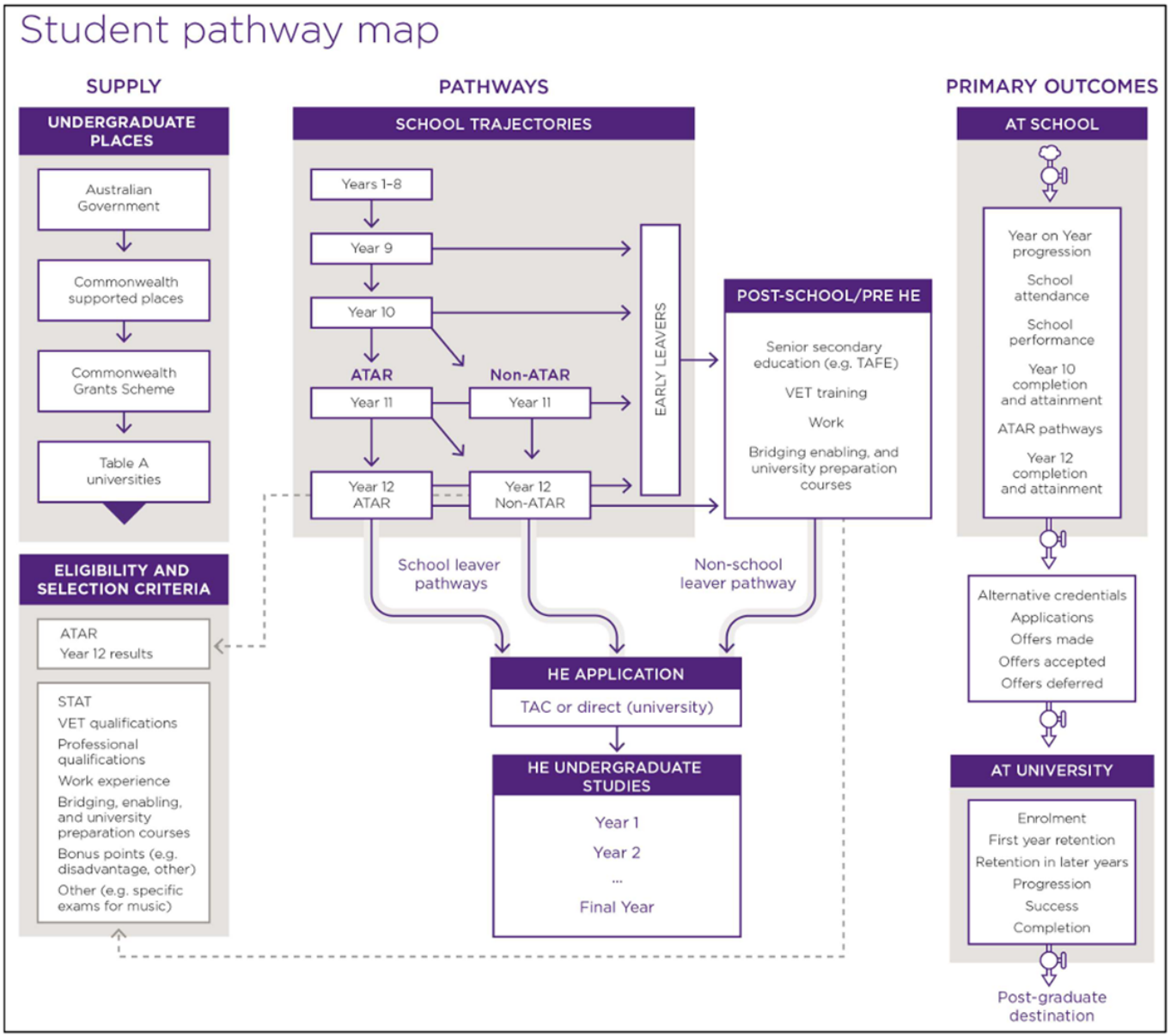

Image of Student pathway map, indicating supply, pathways and primary outcomes for students moving into higher education;
Source: SEHEEF Guidance Manual

An expansive notion of success for student equity program evaluation

Prosperity (Economic, Cultural, Social & Psychological):

Level of student flourishing in terms of their economic, cultural, social and psychological wellbeing

Roundtable Discussions

How will you know if have been 'successful'?

Stay engaged in the national conversation